

‘Grass Roots’ Lawn Tips

The U.S. National Arboretum’s ‘Grass Roots’ Initiative includes a 1.3-acre interactive exhibit that is made up of 12 unique displays demonstrating various benefits and uses of turfgrasses. The primary message of the exhibit is that the best lawns are developed and managed with their purposes in mind, whether those purposes are golf and other sports, linking landscape elements, conserving soil, assuring water retention, or simply beautiful landscapes. ‘Grass Roots’ also maintains its own turfgrass information [website](#).

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The Dog Days of Summer

Summer can take a toll on your lawn. Here are a few timely turf tips to help your lawn look its best:

- **Raise your mower deck a notch or two:** Mowing at the upper end of your lawn species recommended mowing height range will encourage deeper roots and help your lawn be able to withstand drought stress through the hot days of summer. Returning, or “mulch mowing” the clippings, can help return valuable nutrients back to your lawn.
- **Make sure your mowing blade is sharp:** As the lawn dries out in the summertime, the turf leaves lose moisture and can become stiff or “stemmy” and more difficult to clip cleanly. Chances are the last time you looked at your lawn mower blade was in the spring (or perhaps its been longer than that). It’s best to sharpen or change your blade before you start seeing a problem with “tearing” or ripping grass blades, which usually leaves a frayed appearance where the top part of the leaves turn white or yellow.
- **If you irrigate, water deeply and infrequently:** Watering deeply allows the water to infiltrate farther into the root zone to help provide water to the roots which are there. Watering deeply, then waiting a few days, allows the soil to dry enough to allow oxygen back into the soil.
- **Importance of fertilizing:** With the second half of summer upon us, it’s important to think about fertilizing for the last time or two, especially for those who have warm-season lawns in the transition zone and south. While it’s best to wait until fall to fertilize cool-season grasses like tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass, warm-season grasses, like bermudagrass and St. Augustinegrass, enjoy the heat of summer. You can check your [state’s university turfgrass extension website](#), but, in general, you should fertilize most warm-season lawns with 1 lb. of nitrogen/1000 square feet during August.

Visit the following ‘Grass Roots’ resources, for more general lawn care information:

- Lawn Care Education: www.usna.usda.gov/Education/Lawn%20Care.pdf
- US Land Grant Colleges and Universities: Turfgrass Programs and Extension Service Information: <http://www.usna.usda.gov/Education/LandGrantColleges.pdf>

